

Related U.S. Application Data

- (60) Provisional application No. 60/645,437, filed on Jan. 19, 2005, provisional application No. 60/647,646, filed on Jan. 26, 2005, provisional application No. 60/733,392, filed on Nov. 4, 2005.

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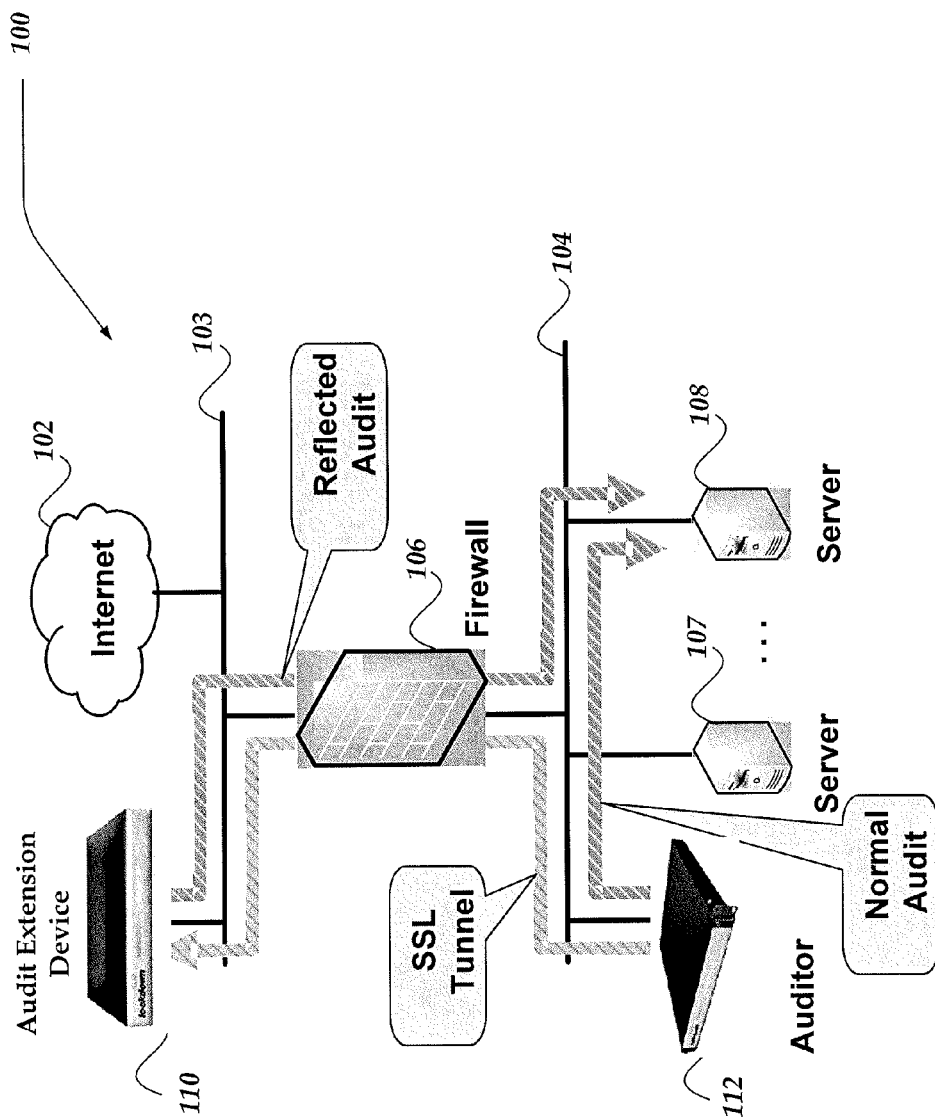


FIG. 1

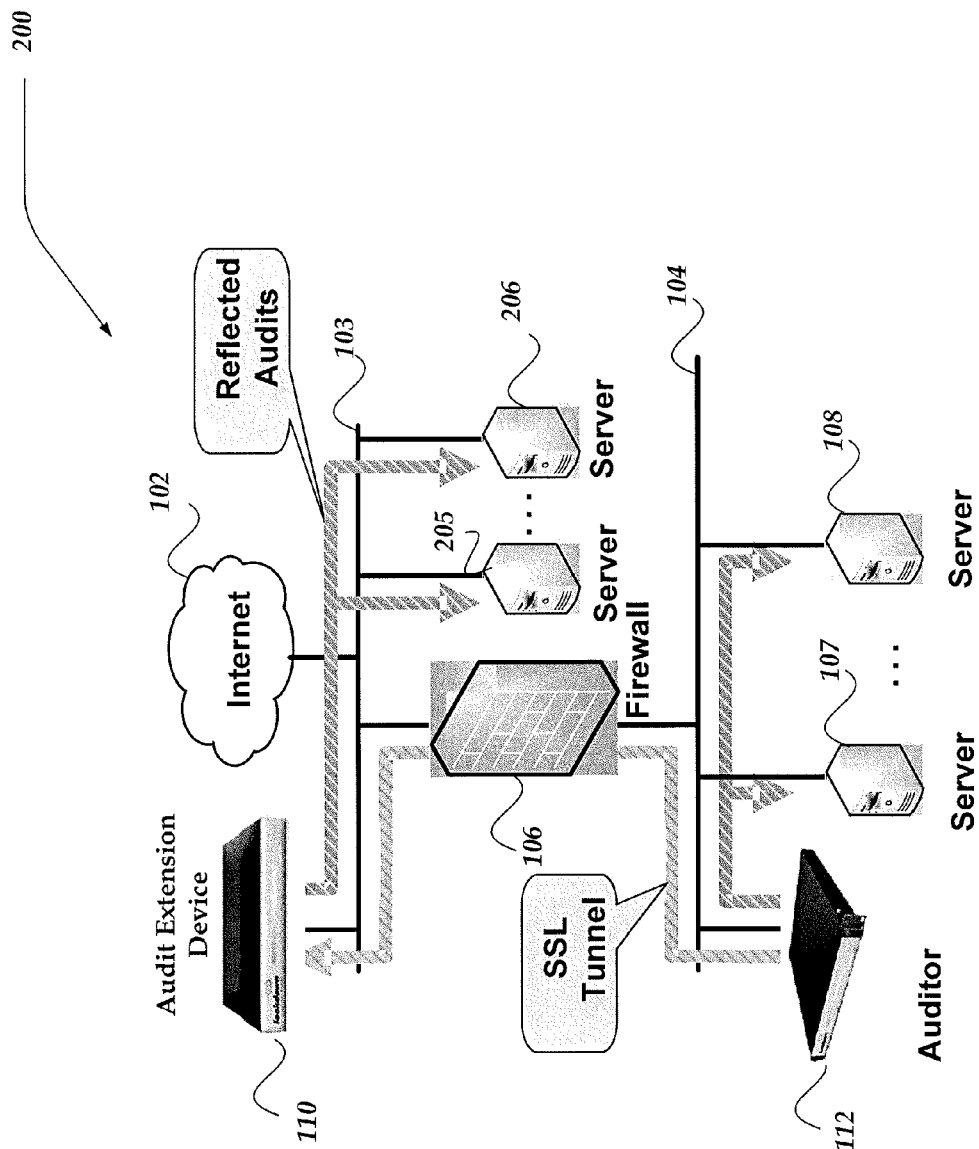


FIG. 2

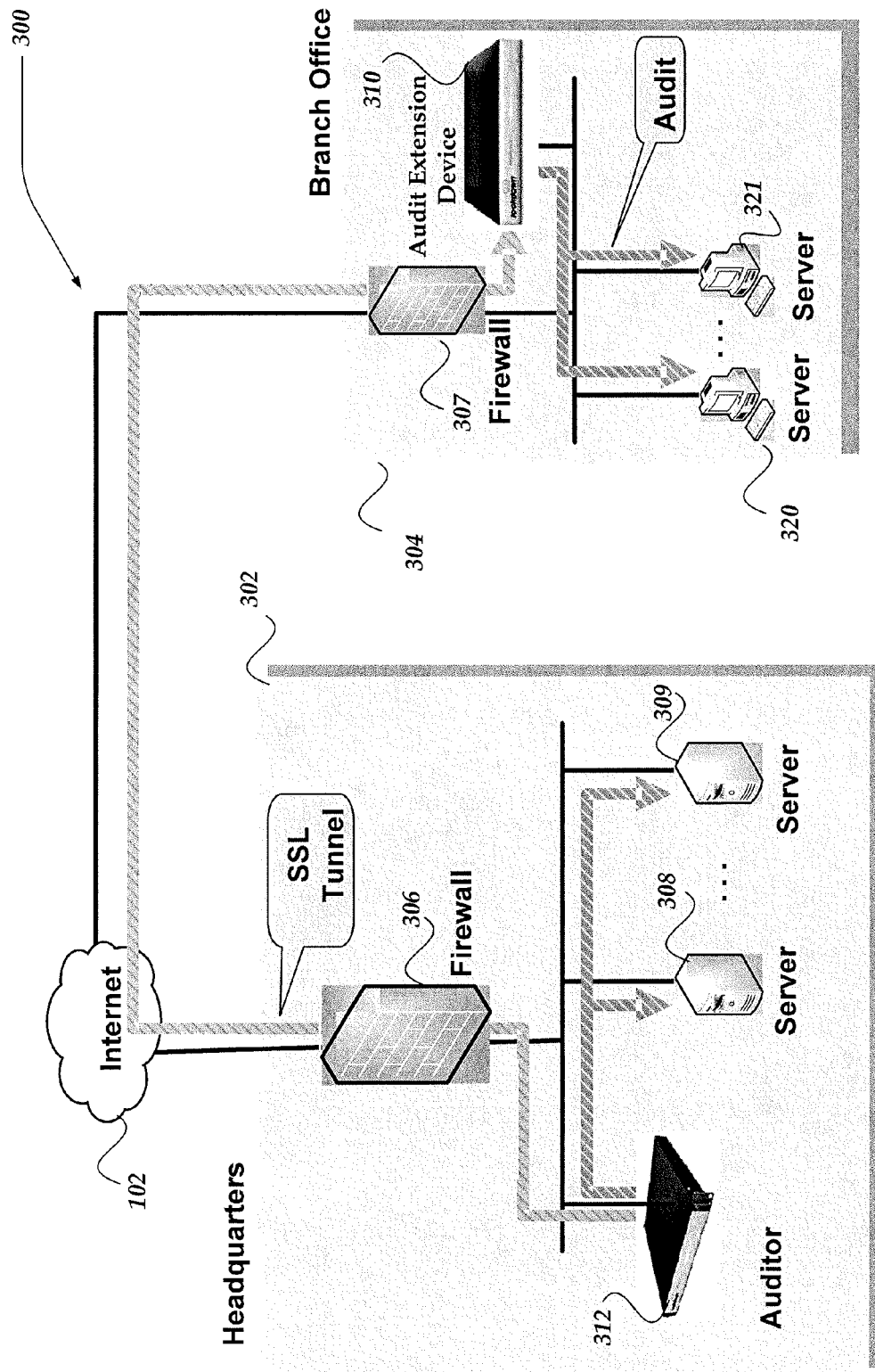


FIG. 3

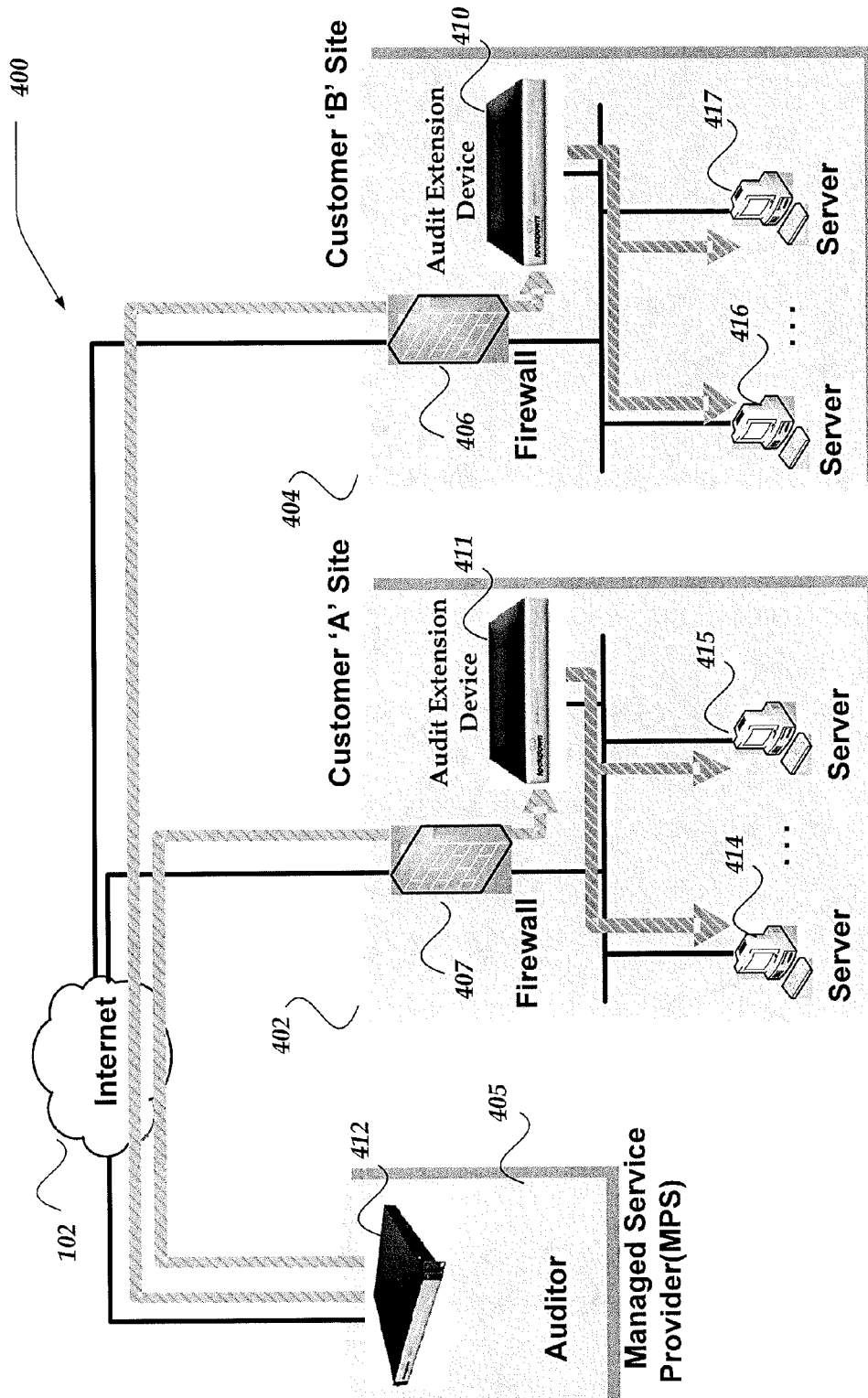


FIG. 4

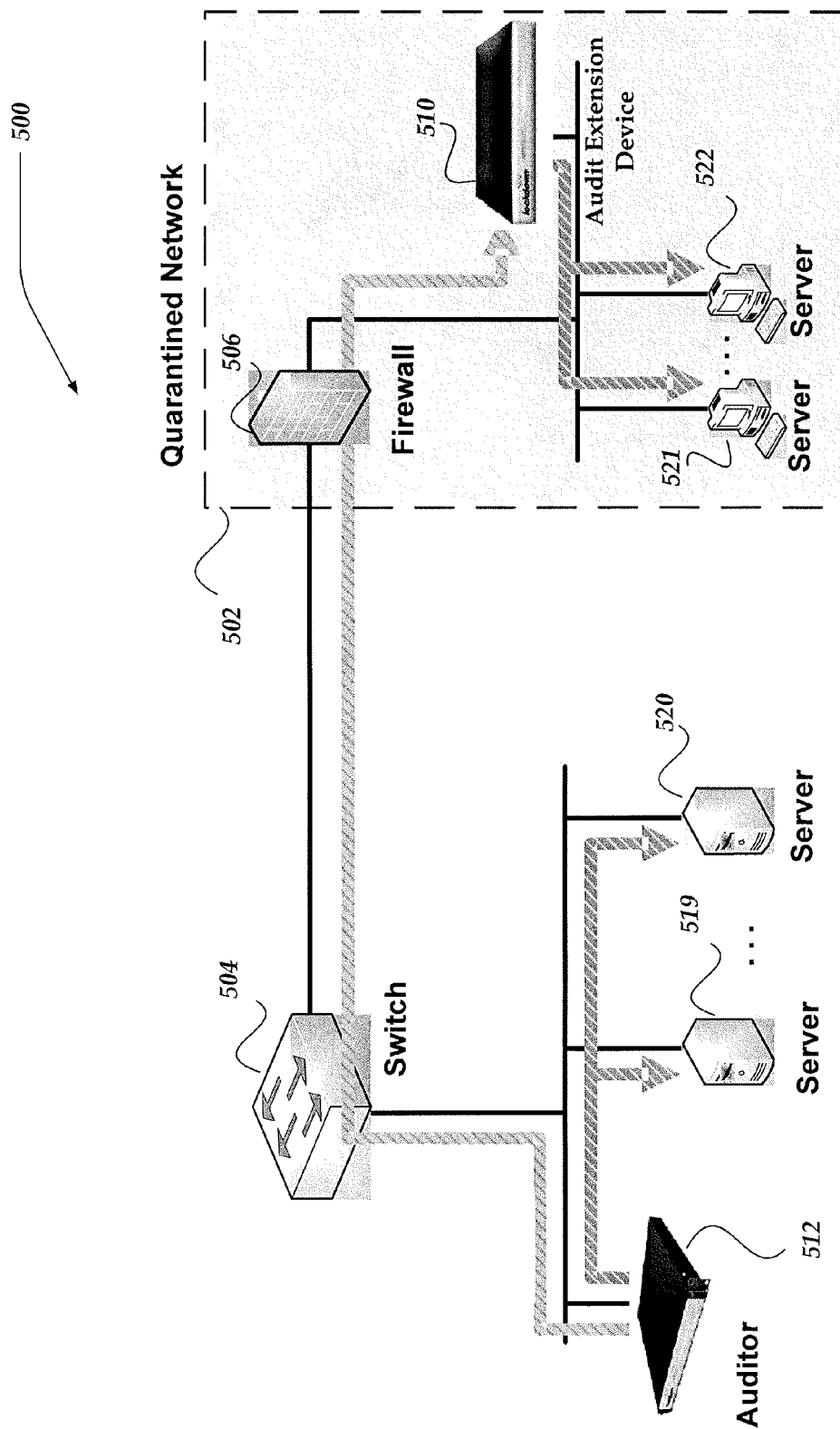


FIG. 5

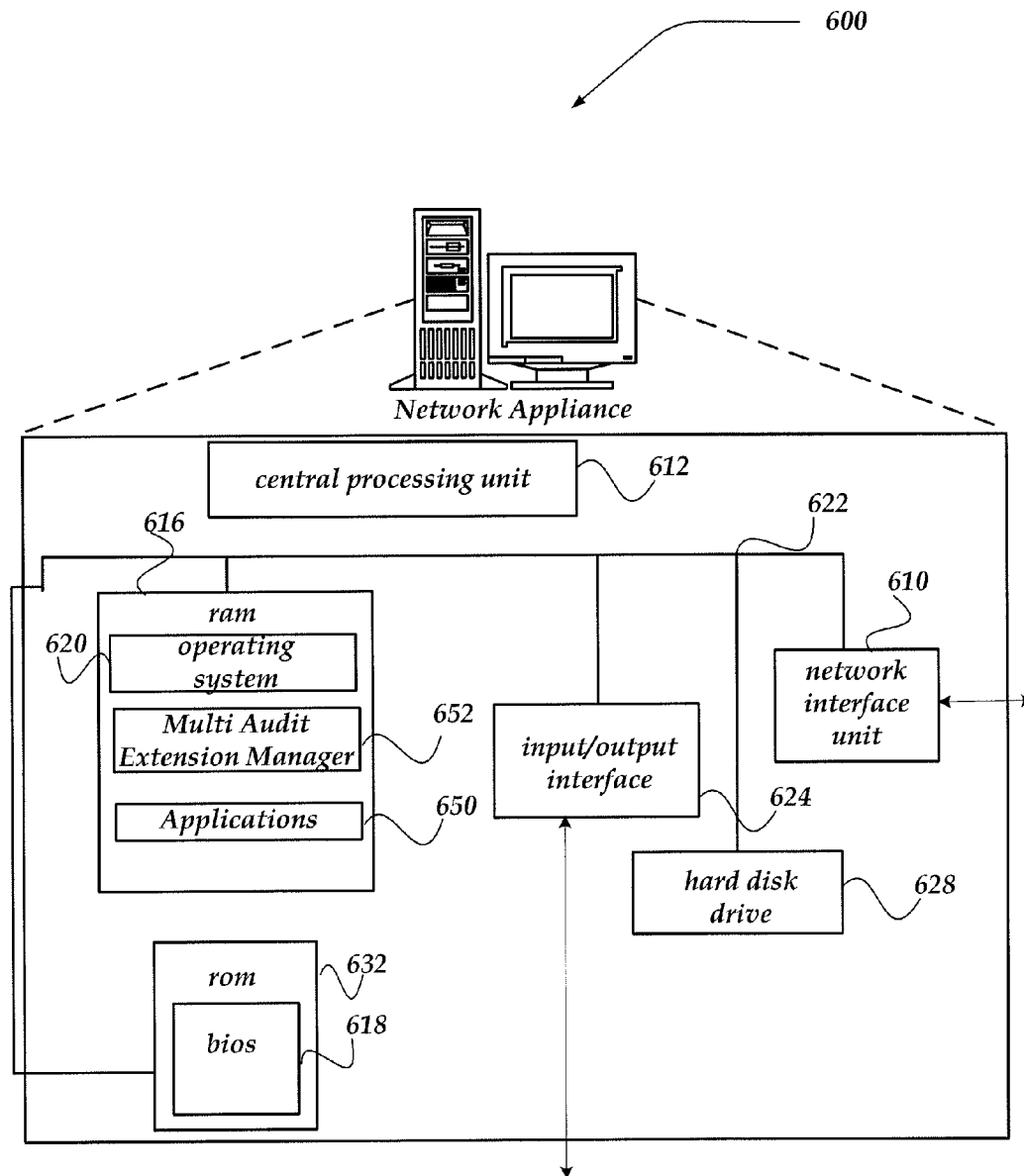
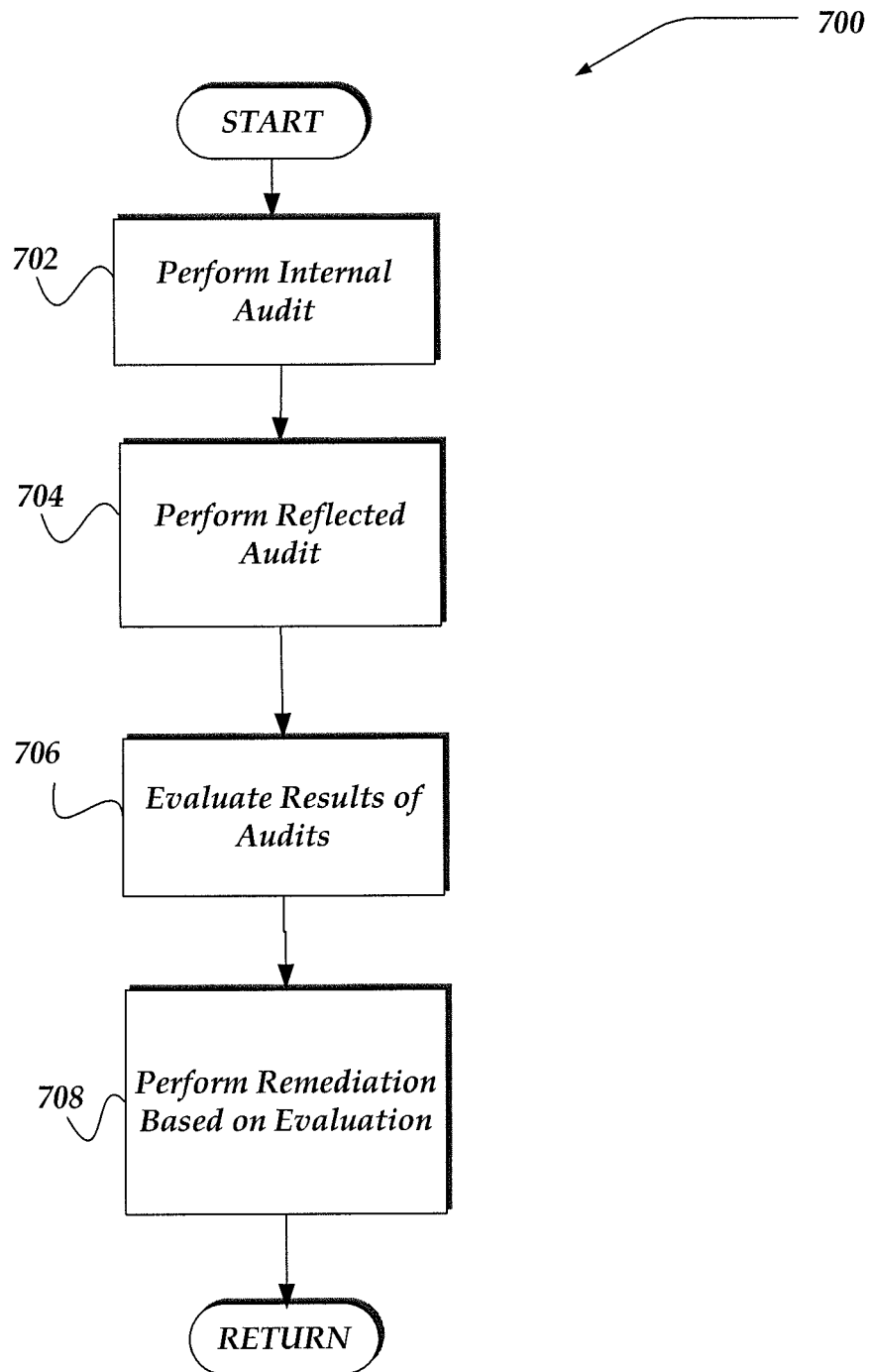


FIG. 6

**FIG. 7**

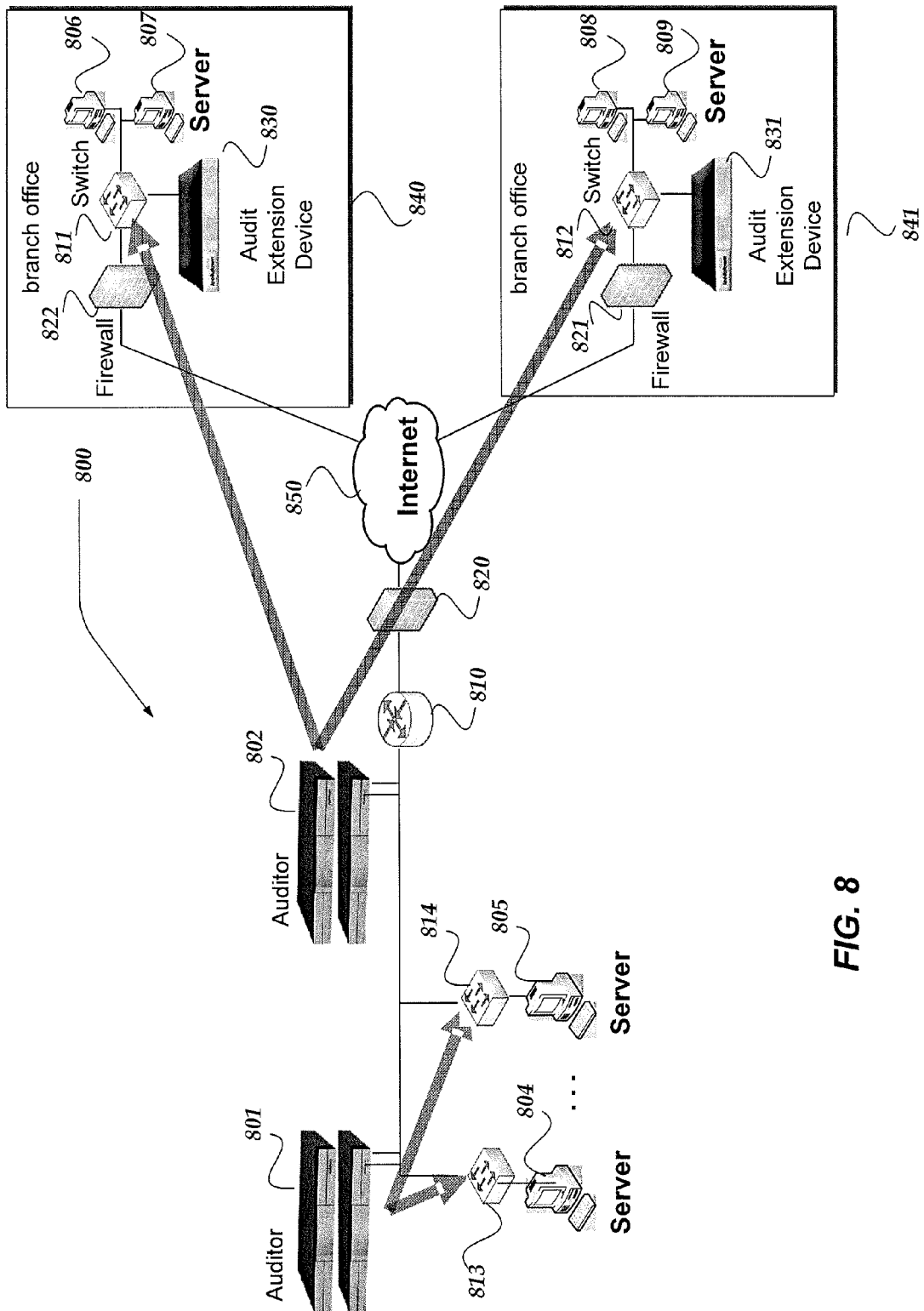


FIG. 8

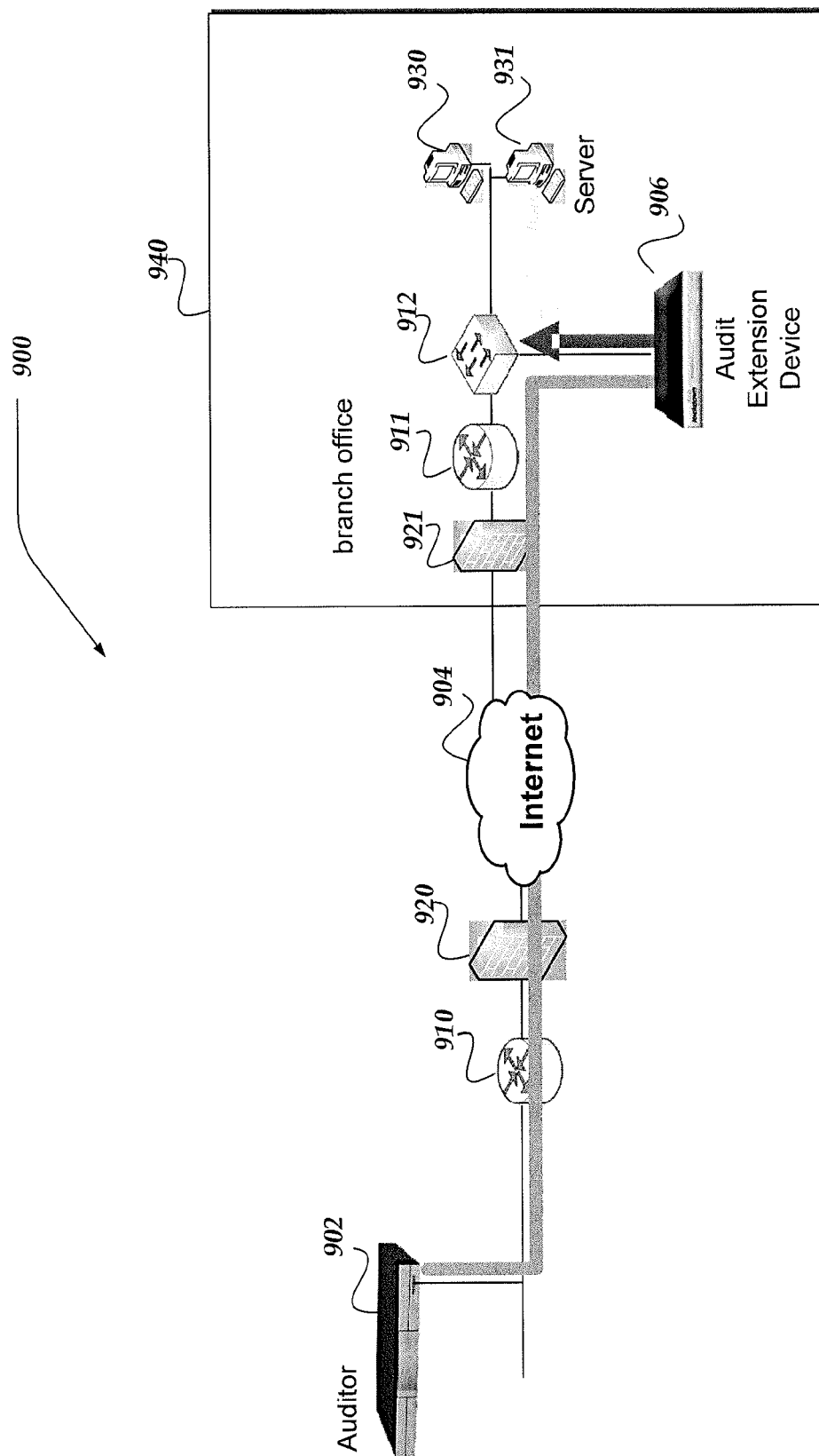


FIG. 9

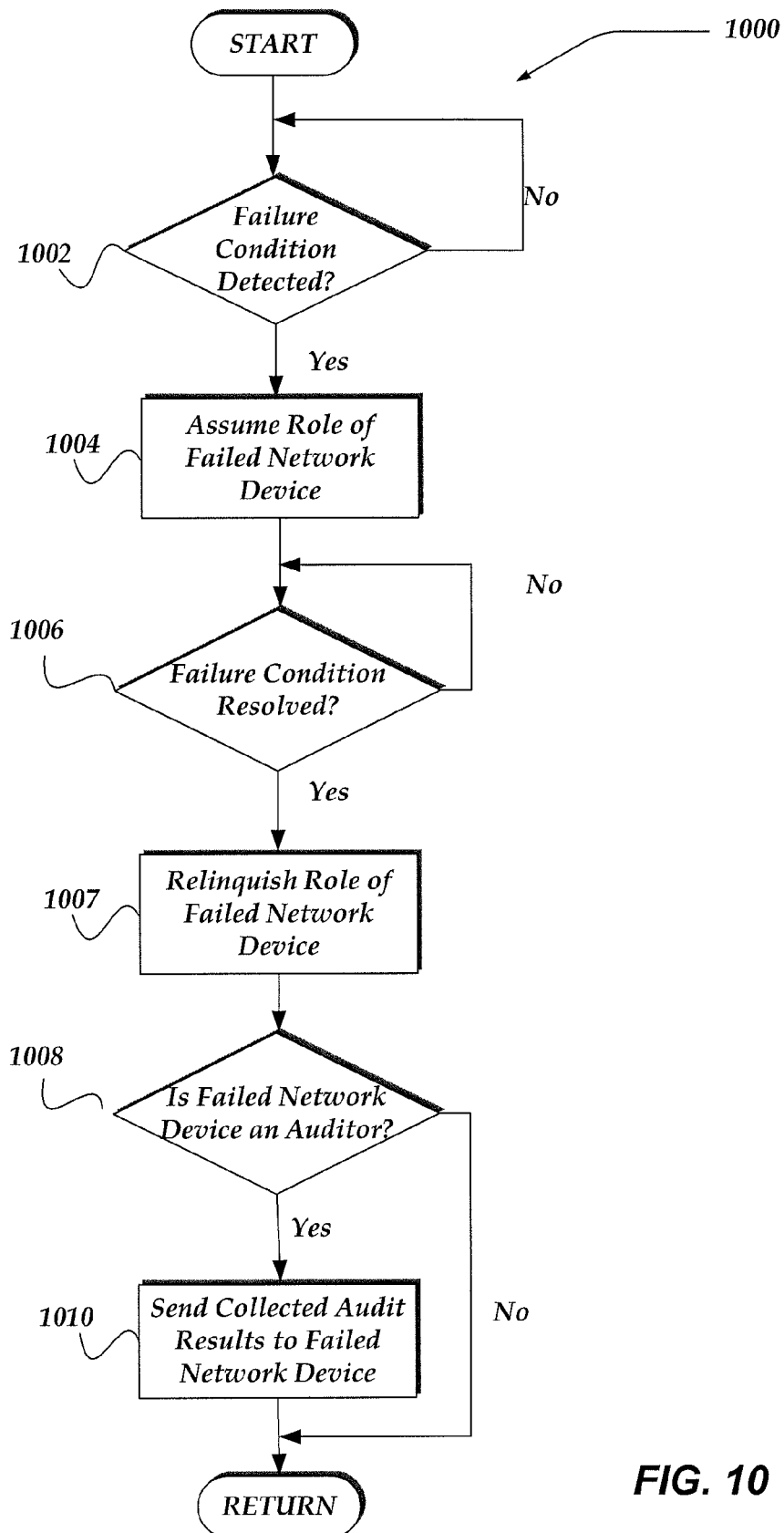


FIG. 10

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NETWORK APPLIANCE FOR VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT AUDITING OVER MULTIPLE NETWORKS

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

The present application is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/877,496, filed Oct. 23, 2007, now U.S. Pat. No. 8,554,903, which is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/331,776, filed on Jan. 13, 2006, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,310,669, issued on Dec. 18, 2007, which claims priority to provisional application No. 60/645,437, filed on Jan. 19, 2005, and provisional application No. 60/647,646, filed on Jan. 26, 2005, and further from provisional application No. 60/733,392, filed on Nov. 4, 2005, their entire disclosures of which are incorporated herein by reference.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to network security, and particularly, but not exclusively, to a method, apparatus, and system for enabling auditing of network vulnerabilities from multiple network vantage points.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Businesses are deriving tremendous financial benefits from using the internet to strengthen relationships and improve connectivity with customers, suppliers, partners, and employees. Progressive organizations are integrating critical information systems including customer service, financial, distribution, and procurement from their private networks with the Internet. The business benefits are significant, but not without risk. Unfortunately, the risks are growing.

In response to the growing business risks of attacks, potentials for legal suits, federal compliance requirements, and so forth, companies have spent millions to protect the digital assets supporting their critical information systems. Most companies have invested, for example, in firewalls, anti-virus, and intrusion detection/prevention systems. However, many of the known exploits to businesses occur with businesses that had deployed some or all of these security technologies.

The reactive nature of many of these security technologies, and the well documented knowledge that network exploits essentially leverage known vulnerabilities, point to an immediate need for a more proactive solution. Many of these businesses include enterprise networks that have become increasingly segmented, often by security technologies, such as firewalls. Many of the businesses may have employed, for example, multiple tiers of firewalls, often using a multi-vendor approach. Such approaches also may have split the business's internal networks, implementing multiple levels of trust. These solutions therefore, have often created security nightmares that may ultimately cost the business and put them at further risk. Therefore, it is with respect to these considerations, and others, that the present invention has been made.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Non-limiting and non-exhaustive embodiments of the present invention are described with reference to the following drawings. In the drawings, like reference numerals refer to like parts throughout the various figures unless otherwise specified.

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For a better understanding of the present invention, reference will be made to the following Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiment, which is to be read in association with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention through an enterprise firewall;

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention outside of a firewall;

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention for multiple vantage points, such as branch offices of a business;

FIG. 4 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention across multiple network vantage points, such as a managed service provider's service operation centers;

FIG. 5 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention for managing a quarantined network;

FIG. 6 illustrates one embodiment of a network appliance that may be included in a system implementing the invention;

FIG. 7 illustrates a logical flow diagram generally showing one embodiment of a process of managing a security vulnerability;

FIG. 8 illustrates an overview of a system that employs at least one auditor and at least one audit extension device to securely quarantine and/or perform vulnerability audits on nodes dispersed across multiple networks;

FIG. 9 illustrates an overview of the operation of a system architecture that employs both an auditor and an audit extension device to securely quarantine and perform vulnerability audits on a plurality of servers remotely located in a branch office; and

FIG. 10 illustrates a logical flow diagram generally showing one embodiment of a process of managing a fail-safe mode of operation, in accordance with the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention now will be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, which form a part hereof, and which show, by way of illustration, specific exemplary embodiments by which the invention may be practiced. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein; rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Among other things, the present invention may be embodied as methods or devices. Accordingly, the present invention may take the form of an entirely hardware embodiment, an entirely software embodiment or an embodiment combining software and hardware aspects. The following detailed description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense.

Throughout the specification and claims, the following terms take the meanings explicitly associated herein, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. The phrase "in one embodiment" as used herein does not necessarily refer to the same embodiment, though it may. As used herein, the term "or" is an inclusive "or" operator, and is equivalent to the term "and/or," unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. The term "based on" is not exclusive and allows for being based on additional factors not described, unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. In addition, throughout the specification, the meaning of "a," "an," and "the" include plural references. The meaning of "in" includes "in" and "on."

As used herein, the term “node” includes virtually any computing device that is capable of connecting to a network. Such devices include, but are not limited to, personal computers, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, servers, network appliances, and the like. A node may refer to a client device, a server device, or the like.

As used herein, the term “audit” refers to an evaluation of a network device, or other computing asset, to determine its compliance with a policy. The audit typically is directed toward computing security aspects of the network device including controls, applications, procedures, operational aspects, and so forth. For example, the audit may evaluate how the network device responds to a network request, a configuration request, a resource request, a probe, or the like. In one embodiment, an audit may result in the network device providing security information about itself, such as whether patches have been performed, whether anti-virus programs are installed, or the like. Thus, the audit may include a request. In one embodiment, the request is for information about the network device. The audit request may also result in an action or other response by the network device for which the audit may be interested. In one embodiment, the audit may also provide recommendations on changes in control, configuration, security policy, procedures, or the like, based on a result of the audit. In another embodiment, the result of the audit may be used to deny access to the network resource, quarantine the network resource, or the like.

As used herein, the term “reflected audit” refers to a form of audit that may be initiated by a computing device on one side of a security perimeter and that may be sent through the security perimeter to be turned towards or reflected to a computing asset. In one embodiment, the reflected audit is towards a computing asset on another side of the security perimeter. In one embodiment, the reflected audit is turned back towards through security perimeter to a computing asset within or on the security perimeter. Such reflected audits are directed towards extending an audit across one or more security perimeters.

The term “security perimeter” refers to an electronic boundary substantially surrounding one or more computing assets. The security perimeter is directed towards managing access to the computing assets based in part on a policy. The security perimeter may be implemented through a single network device, such as a switch, router, bridge, or the like, or through a variety of network devices. Such network devices may also include applications arranged to inspect network traffic and perform filtering decisions including whether the network traffic may flow through the security perimeter. One embodiment of a network device that includes such filtering application is a firewall. However, the invention is not constrained to firewalls, and packet filters, gateways, proxy servers, and the like may also be included.

Briefly stated, the present invention is directed towards an apparatus, system, and method for enabling auditing of network vulnerabilities from multiple network vantage points virtually simultaneously. Multiple network vantage points may include, but are not limited to, remote/branch enterprise sites, devices on an enterprise perimeter, on either side of a security perimeter, and even through the security perimeter. As such, the invention provides reflected audits thereby extending auditing of network vulnerabilities to provide a comprehensive 360 degree audit of internal, external, and remote enterprise network sites. In one embodiment, the present invention may be implemented employing a single auditing device, and one or more audit extension devices that are configured to extend the auditing device’s audit reach to

remote data sites. The auditing device and one or more audit extension devices may communicate using an encrypted network channel through a security perimeter and/or across multiple networks. However, if the operation of the auditing device is determined to be unacceptable, an audit extension device can automatically assume a master mode of operation. In one embodiment, such mode of operation may be maintained by the audit extension device until an auditing device becomes available to assume the master mode of operation.

In embodiment, the master operation of a primary auditing device may be mirrored by a secondary auditing device, which can assume at least a portion of the master operations if the primary auditing device is unavailable to do so, such as when a failure condition (or fail-safe condition) occurs, or the like. In one embodiment, the secondary auditing device may be an audit extension device. Similarly, in one embodiment, the slave operation of a primary audit extension device may be mirrored by a secondary audit extension device, which can assume at least a portion of the slave operations if the primary audit extension device is unavailable to do so, such as when a fail-safe condition occurs, or the like.

Illustrative Operating Environment

FIG. 1 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention through an enterprise firewall. System 100 may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system 100 includes networks 102-104, firewall 106, servers 107-108, auditor 112, and audit extension device 110. Audit extension device 110 is in communication with auditor 112 and servers 107-108 through firewall 106. Auditor 112 is in communication with servers 107-108.

Servers 107-108 may include any computing device capable of providing information in response to a request from another device. As shown in FIG. 1, servers 107-108 may be configured to operate as mail servers, however, the invention is not so constrained, and servers 107-108 may be configured to operate as web servers, database servers, application servers, and the like. Moreover, one of servers 107-108 may be configured as a mail server, while another is configured to provide a different service, without departing from the scope of spirit of the invention. Such devices include personal computers, desktop computers, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, servers, and the like.

Firewall 106 may include any computing device that is capable of implementing a security policy designed to keep a network, or other computing assets, secure from intruders. As such, firewall 106 may be implemented as a router that filters out unwanted packets or may comprise a combination of routers and servers each performing some type of network traffic filtering. For example, firewall 106 may be configured as a proxy server, a gateway, a bridge, or the like. As such, firewall 106 illustrates one embodiment of a network device that enables implementation of a security perimeter. In one embodiment, firewall 106 may be considered to be ‘on’ the security perimeter. The security perimeter is directed towards managing access to such resources as servers 107-108 by devices on the other side of the security perimeter than servers 107-108 (e.g., devices, not shown, that may reside within internet 102, on network 103, or the like).

Devices that may operate as firewall 106 include personal computers, desktop computers, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, servers, routers, bridges, network appliances, and the like.

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Auditor **112** includes virtually any computing device that is configured to manage dynamic network access control. In one embodiment, auditor **112** may enable a security audit to be performed. In one embodiment, auditor **112** may also provide an audit report and remediation to virtually eliminate vulnerabilities, and secure a network infrastructure. In one configuration, auditor **112** may provide end-to-end automated vulnerability management, with network audits being scheduled daily, on-demand, after configuration changes, or the like based on at least a security policy. In one embodiment, auditor **112** employs a policy system that enables extensive user-customization. In one embodiment, auditor **112** may employ a secure web interface which is directed towards simplifying management of enterprise networks.

Auditor **112** may also enable management of network access control at a network switch port level. In one embodiment, auditor **112** provides services and controlled network access that includes quarantining nodes so that they may be identified, audited, and provided an opportunity to be brought into compliance with a security policy, or the like. Auditor **112** may be configured to detect a device seeking to join or otherwise access the network, identify a switch port that the device is attempting to connect to, and determine if the device is authentic and authorized to join the network. As shown, the device seeking to join or otherwise access the network may be servers **107-108**, a client device (not shown), or the like. In one embodiment, the network may be an intranet, such as an enterprise's intranet, or the like. For example, the network may be one of networks **103-104**. If it is determined that the device is unauthorized and/or unauthentic, the device may be quarantined. In one embodiment, the suspect device is quarantined using, for example, a Virtual Local Area Network (VLAN) (not shown). The act of quarantining the suspect device may also be explained to a user of the suspect device, allowing the user and/or device to be identified and registered. The suspect device may then be audited to determine if there are vulnerabilities that might further prevent the device from connecting to the network. If vulnerabilities are determined, in one embodiment, remediation action may be employed to guide the suspect device, user, and/or administrator of the suspect device towards a resolution of the vulnerabilities, such that the device may be reconfigured for acceptance onto the network.

Auditor **112** may also be configured to provide a variety of audits and reports to audit extension device **110**, which may be searchable, and/or archived. Auditor **112** may also provide audit extension device **110** with a variety of alerting information employing tickets, emails, pages, SNMP traps, or the like. In one embodiment, auditor **112** may be configured to initiate or otherwise request that audit extension device **110** perform an audit, such as a reflected audit on one or more computing devices, networks, or the like. In another embodiment, auditor **112** may perform the audit by sending the audit

In one embodiment, auditor **112** employs a secure network path to communicate with audit extension device **110**, and/or servers **107-108**.

Audit extension device **110** is described in more detail below, in conjunction with FIG. 6. Briefly, however, audit extension device **110** may be configured to communicate with auditor **112** to provide a point-of-presence on another network, such as networks **102-103**, and/or the like. In one embodiment, the communication is performed over a secure network path, employing such as Secure Socket Layer (SSL), Transport Layer Security (TLS), Extensible Authentication Protocol Transport Layer Security (EAP-TLS), or the like.

As shown in FIG. 1, an audit may be performed, for example, by auditor **112**, upon network **104** and/or servers

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107-108 through audit extension device **110**. That is, audit extension device **110** may be configured to provide a reflected audit of servers **107-108**, through firewall **106**, and/or networks **103-104**. In one embodiment, the reflected audit is performed by auditor **112** using audit extension **112** to extend its reach. Thus, in one embodiment, auditor **112** may perform a vulnerability assessment upon devices on network **104**, through firewall **106** by employing audit extension device **110** to extend its reach to other devices and networks. The reflected audits may further enable an evaluation of aspects of servers **107-108** that may operate differently when performed through a firewall. For example, such as when a request for access, information, and the like, is perceived to be from an outside source, an internal source responds to a request, and the like.

In another embodiment, the audit may be initiated or otherwise requested by auditor **112**, and performed by audit extension **110**, rather than through audit extension **112**. In any event, results of the audits may be provided to auditor **112** for review and possible remediation.

Networks **102-104** are configured to couple one computing device to another computing device to enable them to communicate. As shown in the figure, network **102** may represent the Internet, while network **103** may represent an external and/or perimeter network, and network **104** may represent an internal network to an enterprise. Thus, networks **102-103** may be considered to be on one side of the security perimeter, while network **104** may reside on the other side of the security perimeter.

Networks **102-104** are enabled to employ any form of computer readable media for communicating data from one electronic device to another. Generally, networks **102-104** can include the Internet in addition to local area networks (LANs), wide area networks (WANs), direct connections, such as through a universal serial bus (USB) port, other forms of computer-readable media, or any combination thereof. On an interconnected set of LANs, including those based on differing architectures and protocols, a router acts as a link between LANs, enabling messages to be sent from one to another. Also, communication links within LANs can include, for example, twisted wire pair or coaxial cable, while communication links between networks may utilize analog telephone lines, full or fractional dedicated digital lines including T1, T2, T3, and T4, Integrated Services Digital Networks (ISDNs), Digital Subscriber Lines (DSLs), wireless links including satellite links, or other communications links known to those skilled in the art. Furthermore, remote computers and other related electronic devices can be remotely connected to either LANs or WANs via a modem and temporary telephone link.

Networks **102-104** may further employ a plurality of access technologies including 2nd (2G), 3rd (3G) generation radio access for cellular systems, WLAN, Wireless Router (WR) mesh, and the like. Access technologies such as 2G, 3G, and future access networks may enable wide area coverage for mobile devices, such as a mobile device with various degrees of mobility. For example, networks **102-104** may enable a radio connection through a radio network access such as Global System for Mobil communication (GSM), General Packet Radio Services (GPRS), Enhanced Data GSM Environment (EDGE), Wideband Code Division Multiple Access (WCDMA), and the like. In essence, networks **102-104** may include virtually any wireless communication mechanism by which data may travel between one computing device and another computing device.

The media used to transmit data in communication links as described above illustrates one type of computer-readable

media, namely communication media. Generally, computer-readable media includes any media that can be accessed by a computing device. Computer-readable media may include computer storage media, communication media, or any combination thereof.

Additionally, communication media typically embodies computer-readable instructions, data structures, program modules, or other data in a modulated data signal such as a carrier wave or other transport mechanism and includes any data delivery media. The terms “modulated data signal,” and “carrier-wave signal” includes a signal that has one or more of its characteristics set or changed in such a manner as to encode data, instructions, data, and the like, in the signal. By way of example, communication media includes wired media such as twisted pair, coaxial cable, fiber optics, wave guides, and other wired media and wireless media such as acoustic, RF, infrared, and other wireless media.

Servers **107-108** represent one embodiment of a computing asset upon which an enterprise may perform a computing security audit. However, the invention is not limited to performing computing security audits on servers **107-108**. For example, a computing security audit may also be performed upon network **104**, firewall **106**, or the like, without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention.

FIG. 2 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention outside of a firewall. System **200** may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system **200** includes components that are substantially similar to those in FIG. 1. This includes networks **102-104**, servers **107-108**, auditor **112**, firewall **106**, and audit extension device **110**. Such components may operate in a substantial similar manner to that described above. In addition, FIG. 1 further illustrates servers **205-206**. As shown, servers **205-206** are in communication with audit extension device **110**.

As shown in the figure, servers **205-206** may be configured to operate on network **103**, which may operate as a perimeter network, a demilitarized zone (DMZ), an external network, or the like. In one embodiment, servers **205-206** operate as web servers. However, the invention is not so limited, and servers **205-206** may operate to provide virtually any service, information and the like. As such, devices that operate as servers **205-206** include personal computers, desktop computers, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, servers, network appliances, and the like.

As shown in FIG. 2, an audit may be performed upon an outside (on the opposing side of firewall **106** of an enterprise network) employing auditor **112** and audit extension **110** to extend the audit. In one embodiment, audit extension **110** enables an audit assessment for security vulnerabilities of servers **205-206**, network **103**, or the like, employing a reflected audit. In one embodiment, auditor **112** enables auditing for security vulnerabilities of internal and external devices, and networks. Employing audit extension **110** enables the extension of an audit across networks, through firewalls, and even across geographical areas. Moreover, audit extension **110** enables auditor **112** to virtually simultaneously audit a device from both sides of firewall **106**. That is, the audit may be performed by sending traffic at substantially the same time from both audit extension **110** and auditor **112** towards one or more servers **205-206**, **107-108**, or the like.

Servers **107-108** and servers **205-206** represent embodiments of computing assets upon which an enterprise may perform a computing security audit. However, computing

security audits may also be performed upon network **104**, firewall **106**, or the like, without departing from the scope or spirit of the invention.

FIG. 3 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention from multiple vantage points, such as branch offices of a business, enterprise, or the like. System **300** may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system **300** includes Internet **102**, headquarters **302**, and branch office **304**. Headquarters **302** includes firewall **306**, auditor **312**, and servers **308-309**. Branch office **304** includes firewall **307**, audit extension device **310**, and servers **320-321**. Headquarters **302** and branch office **304** are intended to represent one networking boundaries of the illustrated computing devices. However, other networking boundaries and configurations of networking boundaries may be employed without departing from the spirit of the invention.

Auditor **312** is in communication with firewall **306**. Firewall **306** is in communication with Internet **102**. Internet **102** is in communication with firewall **307**. Firewall **307** is in communication with audit extension device **310**, and audit extension device **310** is in communication with servers **320-321**. Auditor **312** is also in communication with servers **308-309**.

Servers **320-321** include virtually any computing device residing within networking boundaries of branch office **304** that may be configured to communicate with servers **308-309**. As such, devices that may operate as servers **320-321** include personal computers, desktop computers, multiprocessor systems, microprocessor-based or programmable consumer electronics, network PCs, servers, or the like.

Firewalls **306-307** are configured to operate in a substantial similar manner to firewall **106** of FIG. 1. Servers **309** may operate substantially similar to servers **108** of FIG. 1. Audit extension device **310** and auditor **312** may also operate substantially similar to audit extension device **110** and auditor **112** of FIG. 1, respectively. However, as shown in FIG. 3, audit extension device **310** is configured to enable auditor **312** to perform a remote audit of servers **320-31** and/or networks, and other devices, servers, or the like (not shown) that reside within branch office **304**. Thus, in one embodiment, audits may be performed by auditor **312** through audit extension device **310** upon devices and networks at a remote site, across one or more security perimeters.

Servers **308-309**, servers **320-321**, and firewalls **306-307** represent embodiments of computing assets upon which an enterprise may perform a computing security audit.

FIG. 4 illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention across multiple network vantage points, such as a managed service provider's service operation centers. System **400** of FIG. 4 may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system **400** includes Internet **102**, managed service provider (MSP) **405**, and customer sites **402** and **404**. MSP **405** includes auditor **412**. Customer site **402** includes firewall **407**, audit extension device **411**, and servers **414-415**. Customer site **404** includes firewall **406**, audit extension device **410**, and servers **416-417**. Customer sites **402** and **404** are each intended to represent networking boundaries of computing devices.

Firewalls **406-407** operate substantially similar to firewall **106** of FIG. 1. Servers **414-417** operate substantially similar

to servers **320-321** of FIG. **3**, except that servers **414-415** and servers **416-417** are further configured to communicate with each other.

As shown, auditor **412** is in communication with Internet **102**. Internet **102** is in communication with firewall **407**. Firewall **407** is in communication with audit extension device **411**. Audit extension device **411** is in communication with servers **414-415**. Internet **102** is in further communication with firewall **406**. Firewall **406** is in communication with audit extension device **410**. Audit extension device **410** is in communication with servers **416-417**.

Audit extension devices **410-411** operate substantially similar to audit extension device **110** of FIG. **1**. Auditor **412** operates substantially similar to auditor **112** of FIG. **1**. However, as illustrated in FIG. **4**, at least one audit extension device (**410-411**) is located on distinct networks, such as those of customer site **404** and **402**, respectively. As such, audit extension devices **410-411** may be configured to enable auditing of computing devices, and networks within a same network, network boundary, LAN, network segment, or the like. Moreover, auditor **412** is configured to perform audits of servers **414-417** through audit extension devices **410-411**.

Similar to above, servers **414-417**, and firewalls **406-407**, as well as other network components within customer sites **402** and **404** represent embodiments of computing assets upon which an enterprise may perform a computing security audit.

FIG. **5** illustrates one embodiment of an environment employing the invention for managing a quarantined network. System **500** of FIG. **5** may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system **500** includes quarantined network **502**, switch **504**, auditor **512**, and servers **519-520**. Quarantined network **502** includes firewall **506**, audit extension device **510**, and servers **521-522**. Firewall **506** may operate substantially similar to firewall **106** of FIG. **1**. Servers **521-522** may operate substantially similar to servers **320-321** of FIG. **3**, and servers **519-520** may operate substantially similar to servers **107-108** of FIG. **1**.

As shown, auditor **512** is in communication with switch **504**. Auditor **512** is also in communication with servers **519-520**. Switch **504** is in communication with firewall **506**. Firewall **506** is in communication with audit extension device **510**. Audit extension device **510** is in communication with servers **521-522**.

Switch **504** may include virtually any network device that is configured to isolate selected network traffic between quarantined network **502** and other networks and devices, includes servers **519-520**. Although switch **504** is illustrated as a switch, the invention is not so limited. For example, switch **504** may be implemented as a bridge, router, gateway, proxy server, or the like.

Auditor **512** and audit extension **510** may operate similar to auditor **112** and audit extension device **110** of FIG. **1**, respectively. However, audit extension device **510** is configured to maintain a secure communication with auditor **512**, such that auditor **512** is enabled to employ audit extension device **510** to perform an audit assessment on servers **521-522**, and/or other devices, servers, and related networks (not shown) within quarantined network **502**.

Servers **519-522**, and firewall **506**, as well as other network components within quarantined network **502** represent embodiments of computing assets upon which an enterprise may perform a computing security audit.

FIG. **8** illustrates an overview of a system that employs at least one auditor as discussed above and at least one audit extension device to both securely quarantine and perform vulnerability audits on nodes dispersed across multiple networks. System **800** may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system **800** includes auditors **801-802**, switches **810** and **813-814**, servers **804-805**, firewall **820**, network **850**, and branch offices **840-841**. Branch office **840** includes firewall **822**, switch **811**, audit extension device **830**, and servers **806-807**. Branch office **841** includes firewall **821**, switch **812**, audit extension device **831**, and servers **808-809**.

Auditor **801** is in communication with switches **810** and **813-814**. Switch **813** is in communication with server **804**. Switch **814** is in communication with server **805**. Auditor **801** is also in communication with auditor **802** and switch **810**. Switch **810** is in communication with firewall **820**. Firewall **820** is in communication with network **850**. Network **850** is in communication with firewalls **822-821**. Switch **811** is in communication with audit extension device **830**, servers **806-807** and firewall **822**. Switch **812** is in communication with audit extension device **831**, servers **808-809** and firewall **821**. In one embodiment, auditors **801-802** may operate in a substantial similar manner to auditor **112** of FIG. **1** described above. Audit extension devices **830-831** may operate in a substantial similar manner to audit extension device **110**.

As shown in the figure, auditor **801** is arranged to manage servers that are coupled to the same switch. Also, the mirrored redundancy provided by auditor **801** can improve reliability of the system. Auditors **801-802** are arranged to communicate through various routers and switches, such as switch **810**, across multiple networks with audit extension devices **830-831** that logically, and/or physically, reside on a VLAN in branch offices **840-841**, respectively. Communication tunnels between the auditors **802** and the locally situated audit extension devices **831-832** enable the operation of auditor **802** to appear "local" to the managed servers **806-809** on the VLANs.

Audit extension devices **830-831** can also enable auditor **802** to locally manage the operation of switches **811-812** for the respective servers **806-809** in the corresponding branch offices **840-841**. The presence of the audit extension devices **830-831** on the VLAN at branch offices **840-841** enables remote network address control without diminishing the capacity of layer 2 network accesses through a router. For example, auditor **802** may employ audit extension device **830-831** to remotely quarantine computing assets, such as servers **806-809**. It is understood that Layer 2 refers to the Open Systems Interconnection (OSI) reference model for network communications.

Additionally, if it is determined that one of auditors **801-802** fails to perform its actions for at least one of a plurality of failure or fail-safe reasons, at least one of audit extension devices **830-831** can automatically switch to operating as an auditor. In one embodiment, the audit extension device that assumed that role of the auditor may maintain that role until the remotely located auditor can resume proper operation again, or another auditor indicates that it is to assume the role. Such fail-safe reasons include, but are not limited to a network failure, a device failure, a component incompatibility with an auditor that may affect its quarantining of a device, a component failure with an auditor that may affect its auditing of a device, communication with a device, or the like.

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FIG. 9 illustrates an overview of the operation of a system architecture that employs both auditor 902 and audit extension device 906 to securely quarantine and perform vulnerability audits on a plurality of servers remotely located in a branch office 940. System 900 may include many more, or less, components than those shown, however, those shown are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention.

As shown in the figure, system 900 includes auditor 902, switch 910, firewall 920, network 904, and branch office 940. Branch office 940 includes firewall 921, switches 911-912, audit extension device 906, and servers 930-931. In one embodiment, auditor 902 may operate in a substantial similar manner to auditor 112 of FIG. 1. Audit extension device 906 may operate in a substantial similar manner to audit extension device 110 of FIG. 1.

Auditor 902 is in communication with switch 910. Switch 910 is in communication with firewall 920. Firewall 920 is in communication with network 904. Network 904 is in communication with firewall 921. Firewall 921 is in communication with switch 911. Switch 911 is in communication with switch 912. Switch 912 is in communication with audit extension device 906, servers 930-931.

As shown, tunneled communications between auditor 902 and audit extension device 906 enable auditor 902 appear local to servers 930-931 at the branch office 940. In one embodiment, auditor 902 may appear on a VLAN. Through the tunnel, auditor 902 can manage the operation of branch office 940. Also, audit extension device 906 can locally perform network learning, IP to ARP binding, summarization of SNMP traps, or the like, and provide this information to remotely located auditor 902.

Audit extension device 906 may monitor the operation of auditor 902 for diminished capacity including one or more factors, such as latency, number of errors, dropped packets, bandwidth constraints, broken connection, and the like. If diminished capacity is detected, audit extension device 906 can switch to a fail-safe mode and assume auditor functionality such as quarantines, audits, or the like. In one embodiment, such assumed role may be maintained until another remotely located auditor is available to assume the role. Also, audit extension device 906 can take over as a local auditor, such as auditor 902, if it is determined that auditor 902 is rebooting, or based on a variety of other fail-safe reasons.

In one embodiment, after audit extension device 906 switches over to a fail safe mode of operation as a local auditor, it can freeze the number of nodes on the VLAN. In one embodiment, this may be performed using an IP address map, or the like. Also, prior to a fail-safe mode the local auditor (e.g., auditor 902, or the like) can learn about different available port(s) and provide that information to audit extension device 906 to use if the fail-safe mode occurs.

Once the condition(s) that caused a fail-safe mode to occur are determined to no longer be present, several operations may occur to enable remotely located auditor 902 to reassume its role. For example, the tunnel between remotely located auditor 902 and the audit extension device 906 may be re-established. Either auditor 902 or audit extension device 906 can be the initiator of the tunnel. In one embodiment, the device that initiates creation of the tunnel may be selectively configurable by an administrator. Switch 912 at branch office 940 may also be returned to a "pre-fail-safe" mode of operation. Information obtained by audit extension device 906 during the fail-safe mode of operation may also be provided to auditor 902. Also, if there are redundant remotely located auditors (not shown), they may also be mirrored and/or pro-

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vided with any additional information. Such information may be employed, for example, to synchronize the devices. Illustrative Network Appliance

FIG. 6 shows one embodiment of a network appliance, according to one embodiment of the invention. Network appliance 600 may include many more components than those shown. The components shown, however, are sufficient to disclose an illustrative embodiment for practicing the invention. In addition, although the invention illustrates use of a network appliance, the invention is not so constrained, and virtually any network computing device may be employed, including a server, and the like. In one embodiment, network appliance 600 may operate as an auditor device, an audit extension device, or the like, as shown in FIGS. 1-5.

Network appliance 600 includes processing unit 612, and a mass memory, all in communication with each other via bus 622. The mass memory generally includes RAM 616, ROM 632, and one or more permanent mass storage devices, such as hard disk drive 628, tape drive, optical drive, and/or floppy disk drive. The mass memory stores operating system 620 for controlling the operation of network appliance 600. Any general-purpose operating system may be employed. Basic input/output system ("BIOS") 618 is also provided for controlling the low-level operation of network appliance 600. As illustrated in FIG. 6, network appliance 600 also can communicate with the Internet, or some other communications network, such as shown in FIGS. 1-5, via network interface unit 610, which is constructed for use with various communication protocols including the TCP/IP protocol. Network interface unit 610 is sometimes known as a transceiver, transceiving device, network interface card (NIC), and the like.

Network appliance 600 may also include an SMTP handler application for transmitting and receiving email. Network appliance 600 may also include an HTTP handler application for receiving and handling HTTP requests, and an HTTPS handler application for handling secure connections. The HTTPS handler application may initiate communication with an external application in a secure fashion.

Network appliance 600 also includes input/output interface 624 for communicating with external devices, such as a mouse, keyboard, scanner, or other input devices not shown in FIG. 6. Likewise, network appliance 600 may further include additional mass storage facilities such as hard disk drive 628. Hard disk drive 628 is utilized by network appliance 600 to store, among other things, application programs, databases, and the like.

The mass memory as described above illustrates another type of computer-readable media, namely computer storage media. Computer storage media may include volatile, non-volatile, removable, and non-removable media implemented in any method or technology for storage of information, such as computer readable instructions, data structures, program modules, or other data. Examples of computer storage media include RAM, ROM, EEPROM, flash memory or other memory technology, CD-ROM, digital versatile disks (DVD) or other optical storage, magnetic cassettes, magnetic tape, magnetic disk storage or other magnetic storage devices, or any other medium which can be used to store the desired information and which can be accessed by a computing device.

The mass memory also stores program code and data. One or more applications 650 are loaded into mass memory and run on operating system 620. Examples of application programs include email programs, schedulers, calendars, web services, transcoders, database programs, word processing

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programs, spreadsheet programs, and so forth. Mass storage may further include applications such as Multi Audit extension Manager (MAM) **652**.

MAM **652** enables auditing network vulnerabilities from multiple network vantage points, virtually simultaneously. MAM **652** may be configured to perform at least those actions described in conjunction with FIG. 7. For example, MAM **652** extends a reach of an auditing device, such as shown in FIGS. 1-5, to audit devices on network perimeters, remote sites, from either side of a security perimeter, through a security perimeter, or the like.

MAM **652** may be configured to receive updates that may include vulnerability tests, hacker signatures, audit tools, or the like, on an on-going basis, or based on an event, condition, or the like. MAM **652** may receive the updates automatically, requiring virtually little or no intervention from an Information Technology staff, administrator, or the like. MAM **652** may receive such updates, and provide assessments through a secure network path, using, such as SSL, TLS, EAP-TLS, or the like. In one embodiment, the secure network path is encrypted. However, the invention is not constrained to these protocols, and virtually any encrypted network protocol may be used to authenticate access and/or encrypt network traffic between network appliance **600** and another device. Moreover, MAM **652** may provide an integrated wireless security and auditing solution for virtually all wireless 802.11x access points and clients. In addition, in one embodiment, the secure network path is configured to tunnel through a firewall, across networks, security perimeters, around security perimeters, or the like.

Generalized Operations

The operation of certain aspects of the invention will now be described with respect to FIG. 7 and FIG. 10. FIG. 7 illustrates a logical flow diagram generally showing one embodiment of a process of managing a security vulnerability. Process **700** may be implemented, for example, within auditor **112** and/or audit extension device **110** of FIG. 1, or the like.

Process **700** begins, after a start block, at block **702**, where an internal audit is performed upon a network device within a security perimeter. Thus, the internal audit may include examination of various aspects of the network device to determine whether the network device is in compliance with a security policy. The audits may include, but are not limited to, determining a configuration of the network device, performing attempts to access various resources through the network device, or the like. The audit may be performed based on a predefined schedule, based on an event, such as a configuration change, a request from another device, an administrator, or the like. In one embodiment, the internal audit may produce an internal audit result. The internal audit result may include a report, a script, a database entry, or the like. Referring to FIG. 1, the internal audit may be performed by auditor **112** upon one or more servers **107-108**, network **104**, or the like. Similarly, in FIG. 3, the internal audit may be performed by auditor **312** upon servers **308-309**, or the like. Processing then continues to block **704**.

At block **704**, a reflected audit may be performed on one or more network devices, networks, or the like. In one embodiment, the reflected audit is initiated by an audit device on one side of a security perimeter and is performed using an audit extension device on the other side of the security perimeter. Thus, in one embodiment, the reflected audit may employ an audit extension device, such as audit extension device **110** of FIG. 1, audit extension device **310** of FIG. 3, and/or audit extension devices **410-411** of FIG. 4.

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In one embodiment, the network device to be audited may reside within the security perimeter, such as servers **107-108** of FIG. 1. In that configuration, the reflected audit may be reflected back through the security perimeter by the extension audit device residing on the outside of the security perimeter. Referring to FIG. 1, the reflected audit may then be reflected by audit extension device **110** back through firewall **106** to evaluate one or more servers **107-108**, network **104**, or the like.

In another embodiment, the reflected audit may be sent through the security perimeter and reflected towards a network device, network. For example, as shown in FIG. 2, the illustrated audit extension device reflects the audit to one or more servers **205-206** on the outside of the security perimeter. Similarly, the reflected audit may be sent through the security perimeter and reflected or redirected towards servers **320-321** of FIG. 3. The reflected audit result may produce a reflected audit result. In one embodiment, the reflected audit result may be provided through a secure network path towards the auditor. Processing then continues to block **706**.

At block **706**, the results of the internal and/or reflected audits are evaluated to determine whether they indicate compliance to a security policy. For example, the audit results may indicate whether that the audited device, network, or the like, includes adequate network resources and/or security, a determined configuration, procedures, provides determined responses to particular events, or the like. Processing then continues to block **708**.

At block **708**, based on the determination at block **706**, one or more remediation actions may be performed, including, but not limited to quarantining a non-compliant device, network, or the like, performing an action that enables the audited network, device or the like, to be brought into compliance, or the like. Processing then may return to a calling process.

FIG. 10 illustrates a logical flow diagram generally showing one embodiment of a process of managing a fail-safe mode of operation. Process **1000** may be implemented, for example, within auditors **801-802** and/or audit extension devices **830-831** of FIG. 8.

The terms "master," and "slave," as employed herein describe a relationship between two (or more) audit network devices. For example, in one embodiment, an auditor may be designated as a master network device, while an audit extension device or another auditor may be designated as a slave network device to the master network device. Similarly, in another embodiment, one audit extension device may be designated as a master network device, while another audit extension device may be designated as a slave network device to that master.

Communications may occur between the master network device and the slave network device that enables the slave to assume a role of the master in the event of a detected failure or fail-safe condition. Such communications, for example, may provide information that enables the master and slave network devices to share information, such as audit results, state information, assigned devices, or the like. Such information may be used to synchronize the master and slave devices. The communications may also provide information that indicates a failure condition, a diminished capacity of one of the network devices, or the like. The communications may, in one embodiment, be over a secure channel.

In process **1000**, a slave network device may be monitoring and communicating information with a master network device. Thus, process **1000** begins, after a start block, at decision block **1002**, where a determination is made whether a fail-safe (e.g., a failure) condition is detected of a predeter-

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mined network device. Such predetermined network devices include an auditor, an audit extension device, or the like. The fail-safe condition may include a diminished capacity of a network device, a network failure, a rebooting of a network device, or the like. If the fail-safe condition is detected, then processing continues to block **1004**. Otherwise, processing loops back to decision block **1002**.

At block **1004**, a network device assumes the role of the failed network device. In one embodiment, the slave network device may assume the role of a master network device. For example, the slave network device may be an audit extension device, such as one of audit extension devices **830-831** of FIG. **8**. In one embodiment, the failed master network device may be one of auditor **802** of FIG. **8**. Thus, in one embodiment, the audit extension device may assume the role of the auditor. That is, in one embodiment, the audit extension device may assume auditor functionality including, for example, performing quarantines, audits, or the like.

In another example, the failed network device may be one of audit extension devices **830-831** of FIG. **8**. In this example, another audit extension device may act as the slave network device and assume the role of the failed audit extension device. That is, for example, the other audit extension device may provide a reflected audit of servers, or the like.

Processing then continues to decision block **1006**, where a determination is made whether the fail-safe condition is resolved, or is no longer detected. In one embodiment, the fail-safe condition may be resolved when it is determined that the failed network device no longer has diminished capacity, the network has adequate latency and/or bandwidth, or the network device is otherwise properly functioning. If the fail-safe condition is resolved, then processing continues to block **1007**. Otherwise, processing loops back to block **1006**.

At block **1007**, the network device relinquishes the role of the failed network device. In one embodiment, the slave network device might relinquish the role of performing audits, quarantines, or the like.

Processing then continues to decision block **1008**, where a determination is made whether the failed master network device is an auditor. If the failed master device is not an auditor, then processing may return to a calling process to perform other actions. Otherwise, if the failed master device is an auditor, then processing continues to block **1010** where the slave network device sends collected information, such as collected audit results, gathered during its role as the master network device, to the master network device. Processing then may return to a calling process to perform other actions.

It will be understood that each block of the flowchart illustration, and combinations of blocks in the flowchart illustration, can be implemented by computer program instructions. These program instructions may be provided to a processor to produce a machine, such that the instructions, which execute on the processor, create means for implementing the actions specified in the flowchart block or blocks. The computer program instructions may be executed by a processor to cause a series of operational steps to be performed by the processor to produce a computer implemented process such that the instructions, which execute on the processor to provide steps for implementing the actions specified in the flowchart block or blocks.

Accordingly, blocks of the flowchart illustration support combinations of means for performing the specified actions, combinations of steps for performing the specified actions and program instruction means for performing the specified actions. It will also be understood that each block of the flowchart illustration, and combinations of blocks in the flowchart illustration, can be implemented by special purpose

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hardware-based systems which perform the specified actions or steps, or combinations of special purpose hardware and computer instructions.

The above specification, examples, and data provide a complete description of the manufacture and use of the composition of the invention. Since many embodiments of the invention can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, the invention resides in the claims hereinafter appended.

What is claimed is:

1. A method for managing an audit by an audit extension device, comprising:

initiating communication between an audit extension device and an audit device for an audit by receiving, by the audit extension device through a security perimeter from the audit device, a request for the audit to be performed on a plurality of computing assets, the request for the audit including a request for information to be provided by the plurality of computing assets, wherein the plurality of computing assets are separate from the audit device;

reflecting the audit based on the request for the audit towards the plurality of computing assets;

sending, by the audit extension device, a result of the audit through the security perimeter to the audit device;

assuming operations, by the audit extension device, of the audit device in response to a first detection indicating that the audit device is in a failure condition; and

communicating with at least one of a network device and the audit device, and relinquishing operations of the audit device in response to a second detection indicating at least one of:

that the audit device is not in the failure condition, and that the network device is assuming operations of the audit device.

2. The method of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of computing assets are on a same side of the security perimeter as the audit extension device.

3. The method of claim **1**, wherein the request for the audit further includes at least one of a request for a configuration, a probe, or a request for a resource associated with the plurality of computing assets.

4. The method of claim **1**, wherein the audit extension device is configured as a network appliance.

5. The method of claim **1**, wherein at least one of the receiving the request for the audit or the sending the result of the audit is performed through a secure network path.

6. The method of claim **1**, wherein the plurality of computing assets are on a different networking side of the security perimeter as the audit extension device.

7. A method for managing an audit by an audit device, comprising:

initiating communication between an audit extension device and an audit device for an audit by sending a request for the audit to be performed on a plurality of computing assets through a security perimeter to the audit extension device, the request for the audit including a request for information to be provided by the plurality of computing assets, wherein the plurality of computing assets are separate from the audit device;

receiving, by the audit device, a result of the audit from the audit extension device through the security perimeter; performing a remediation action based at least in part on a security policy; and

relinquishing operations to the audit extension device in response to a first detection indicating that the audit device is in a failure condition;

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wherein the operations of the audit extension device is relinquished in response to a second detection indicating at least one of:

that the audit device is not in the failure condition, and that a network device is assuming operations of the audit device.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the plurality of computing assets are on a same side of the security perimeter as the audit extension device.

9. The method of claim 7, wherein the request for the audit further includes at least one of a request for a configuration, a probe, or a request for a resource associated with the plurality of computing assets.

10. The method of claim 7, wherein the performing the remediation action includes at least one of providing a recommendation on a configuration, control, security policy, or a procedure associated with the plurality of computing assets.

11. The method of claim 7, wherein the audit device is configured as a network appliance.

12. The method of claim 7, wherein the plurality of computing assets are on a different networking side of the security perimeter as the audit extension device.

13. The method of claim 7, further comprising instructing the audit extension device to quarantine a computing asset of the plurality of computing assets in a quarantined network in response to the computing asset failing to satisfy the security policy.

14. The method of claim 13, further comprising removing the computing asset from the quarantined network in response to the result of the audit or the remediation action indicating that the computing asset satisfies the security policy.

15. The method of claim 7, wherein at least one of the sending the audit request or the receiving the result of the audit is performed through a secure network path.

16. A non-transitory computer-readable medium storing executable instructions that, when executed, cause an audit device to perform operations, comprising:

initiating communication between an audit extension device and an audit device for an audit by sending a request for the audit to be performed on a plurality of computing assets through a security perimeter to the audit extension device, the request for the audit including a request for information to be provided by the plurality of computing assets, wherein the plurality of computing assets are separate from the audit device;

receiving, by the audit device, a result of the audit from the audit extension device through the security perimeter; performing a remediation action based at least in part on a security policy; and

relinquishing operations to the audit extension device in response to a first detection indicating that the audit device is in a failure condition;

wherein the operations of the audit extension device is relinquished in response to a second detection indicating at least one of:

that the audit device is not in the failure condition, and that a network device is assuming operations of the audit device.

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17. An audit extension device, comprising:

a network interface unit configured to initiate communication between an audit extension device and an audit device for an audit by receiving, through a security perimeter from the audit device, a request for the audit to be performed on a plurality of computing assets, the request for the audit including a request for information to be provided by the plurality of computing assets; and a processing unit configured to:

reflect the audit based on the request towards the plurality of computing assets,

send a result of the audit to the audit device through the security perimeter,

assume operations of the audit device in response to a first detection indicating that the audit device is in a failure condition, and

communicate with at least one of a network device and the audit device, and relinquish operations of the audit device in response to a second detection indicating at least one of:

that the audit device is not in the failure condition, and that the network device is assuming operations of the audit device.

18. A system, comprising:

an audit extension device including:

a first network interface unit configured to initiate communication between an audit extension device and an audit device for an audit by receiving, through a security perimeter, a request for the audit to be performed on a plurality of computing assets, the request for the audit including a request for information to be provided by the plurality of computing assets, wherein the plurality of computing assets are separate from the audit device and

a first processing unit configured to:

reflect the audit based on the request towards the plurality of computing assets,

send a result of the audit to the audit device through the security perimeter,

assume operations of the audit device in response to a first detection indicating that the audit device is in a failure condition, and

communicate with at least one of a network device and the audit device, and relinquish operations of the audit device in response to a second detection indicating at least one of:

that the audit device is not in the failure condition, and

that the network device is assuming operations of the audit device; and

an audit device including:

a second network interface unit configured to send the request for the audit through the security perimeter, and

a second processing unit configured to:

receive the result of the audit from the audit extension device through the security perimeter, and

perform a remediation action based at least in part on a security policy.

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